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C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 001226

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA -- PARLIAMENT APPROVES NEW IRAQ DEPLOYMENT;
PLATOON-PLUS SET TO DEPLOY MID-AUGUST

REF: SARAJEVO 1111

Classified By: Political Counselor Michael Murphy for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d)

PLATOON PLUS TO IRAQ

¶1. (SBU) On July 30, the Bosnian House of Peoples voted to confirm the Presidency's decision to deploy a platoon-plus, 49 men, of Bosnian soldiers for fixed-site security duties in Iraq by a vote of 11 in favor, 0 opposed and 2 abstentions. The previous day, the House of Representatives voted to approve the deployment by a vote of 30-0-4. Numerous parliamentarians spoke in favor of the deployment during the two house sessions, explaining that this and other deployments were crucial for the development of the Bosnian Armed Forces and demonstrated Bosnia's commitment to international peace and security. Many parliamentarians also noted that continued participation in these missions would demonstrate Bosnia's commitment to NATO. With the approval of both houses of parliament, the last legal hurdle for the deployment has been cleared. The Bosnian Armed Forces have already prepared and trained the unit, which is scheduled to deploy to Iraq in mid-August.

RADMANOVIC AND IVANIC ASSIST WITH LAST-MINUTE GLITCH

¶2. (C) Final parliamentary approval of the deployment did encounter one unexpected difficulty. Before reaching the floor of the House of Representatives and House of Peoples, the approval of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Security was required. At the July 24 session of the committee, Dusanka Majkic, a representative of the Alliance for Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), effectively blocked approval of the deployment by abstaining from the final committee vote. Majkic was the only Serb representative present at the session, and, under parliamentary rules, the positive vote of at least one member of each constituent peoples was required. Majkic explained her opposition by noting that "as a mother" she could not "in good conscience" support sending young Bosnians to war.

¶3. (C) On July 25, the Ambassador phoned the Serb member of the Presidency, Nebojsa Radmanovic, also an SNSD member, to

inquire whether SNSD had shifted its position on the deployment, which the president had voted to approve. President Radmanovic assured the Ambassador that despite Majkic's denunciations of the deployment at the committee session, her views were inconsistent with the SNSD position and that he would "fix it." A re-vote of the committee was held on July 29, with another SNSD representative, Drago Kalabic, also present and voting in favor of the deployment. The deployment cleared committee by a vote of 6-1-1. The delay caused by the committee also required rescheduling of the House of Representatives and House of Peoples votes, and we worked closely with parliamentarians, particularly House of Peoples Speaker Mladen Ivanic, to schedule the extraordinary session of the House of Peoples on July 30.

COMMENT: SOLID SUPPORT FOR DEPLOYMENTS; PLANNING AHEAD

14. (C) Not a single vote was cast against the Iraq deployment in the HoR and HoP. Even the Social Democratic Party (SDP), long opposed to the war in Iraq, voted in favor. In the past year and a half, there has been a significant shift of attitude within political circles regarding Bosnia's Iraq deployments. Previously, we encountered significant resistance, particularly among Bosniaks, to Bosnian participation in peace support operations. Positive media coverage of the current Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit's work in Iraq and Embassy- arranged visits to Iraq for key political leaders, including Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency Haris Silajdzic, contributed to a shift in Bosniak attitudes. Fringe politicians still criticize the deployments. (Note. Serb Democratic Party Representative

Slobodan Saraba explained his opposition by citing "50 degree celsius heat" in Iraq and labeled it a "human rights concern." End Note.) Nonetheless, no credible opposition to Bosnia's participation in the Iraq and Afghanistan mission currently exists. While this is a welcome development, the political situation remains fluid, and, as President Komsic privately cautioned us, support could erode if the Bosnian forces were to take casualties.

15. (C) The Ministry of Defense has already begun internal discussions regarding the possible expansion of Bosnian Armed Forces participation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Minister Cikotic has told us that he plans to expand the platoon-plus to company size in its next rotation, and will deploy staff officer support to ISAF. Coupled with Bosnia's continued deployment of its Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit to Iraq, this would be a significant contribution for Bosnia's nascent Armed Forces in the next year. Aside from relieving the burden on our own forces, Bosnia's deployments provide support for broader defense reform efforts in developing a well-trained, capable, and NATO- compatible force.

ENGLISH